

Appl. No. 10/750,609
Amendt. dated Oct. 5, 2006
Reply to Final Office Action of July 5, 2006

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REMARKS / ARGUMENTS

In response to the Final Office Action of July 5, 2006, Applicants have amended independent claim 8 and have canceled claims 9 - 14. Entry of this Amendment, reconsideration and allowance of the pending claims are respectfully requested.

I. Invention Overview

A fuel cell of the present application includes a membrane electrode assembly having a first reactant flow field secured adjacent a first and/or a second surface of the assembly for directing flow of a first reactant adjacent the first and/or second surface of the assembly. The first reactant flow field defines a plurality of two-pass circuits, and each two-pass circuit is in fluid communication with a first reactant inlet for directing the first reactant into the fuel cell and with a first reactant outlet for directing the first reactant out of the fuel cell.

Additionally, the reactant flow field defines a common turn-around in fluid communication with all of the two-pass circuits and between the reactant inlets and outlets of the circuits. Therefore, the first reactant passing from a reactant inlet to a reactant outlet of one two-pass circuit mixes within the common turn-around with the first reactant passing through the other two-pass circuits. The plurality of two-pass circuits facilitates water movement within porous layers defining the

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reactant flow field from adjacent the reactant outlet toward the reactant inlet to humidify the incoming first reactant to thereby aid in passive maintenance of fuel cell water balance.

II. Response to Final Office Action

By the July 5, 2006 Final Office Action, the Examiner first accepted amended drawings of Applicants' Amendment of March 1, 2006, and then removed his prior rejections of claims 1 - 7, indicating that claims 1 - 7 are allowed. However, the Examiner rejected claims 8 - 14 as obvious in light of prior references cited by the Examiner. Claims 8 - 14 were added by the March 1, 2006 Amendment.

Rather than dispute the Examiner's position on claims 8 - 14, the undersigned conducted a September 12, 2006 telephone interview with the Examiner to urge that the limitation of claim 14 was the same as the limitation that was added to original claims 1 and 7 by the March 1, 2006 Amendment that led to allowance of claims 1 - 7; namely - the "common turn-around" and details related thereto. The Examiner agreed that because of that structural characteristic not being shown in the references, new independent claim 8 would be allowable if the structural limitations of new dependent claim 14 were amended into claim 8. The Examiner acknowledged this understanding in a telephone "Interview Summary" received by the undersigned. On behalf of the Applicants, the undersigned thanks the Examiner for his generous expenditure of time and attention to detail in

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cooperatively resolving this matter.

By the above amendment to claim 8, the structural limitations of claim 14 have been amended into claim 8. Therefore, it is urged that Claim 8 is now in condition for allowance.

Moreover, by the above cancellation of claims 9 - 14, the remainder of the Application has now been placed in condition for allowance. Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner enter the present Amendment.

III. Conclusion

By the present amendment to claim 8 and by the cancellation of claims 9 - 14, it is urged that pending claims 1 - 8 are now allowable. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowance.

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Respectfully submitted,
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